

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

ALEC TABAK,

Plaintiff,

- against -

THE BUFFALO NEWS, INC.,

Defendant.

Docket No. 17-cv-02636

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Alec Tabak (“Tabak” or “Plaintiff”), by and through his undersigned counsel, as and for his Complaint against Defendant The Buffalo News, Inc. (“Buffalo News” or “Defendant”) hereby alleges as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This is an action for copyright infringement under Section 501 of the Copyright Act. This action arises out of Defendant’s unauthorized reproduction and public display of a copyrighted photograph of poker-player-turned-debt-collector Travell Thomas, owned and registered by Tabak, a New York-based photographer. Accordingly, Tabak seeks monetary relief under the Copyright Act of the United States, as amended, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This claim arises under the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.* This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338(a).

3. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant resides in and/or is doing business in New York.

4. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b).

PARTIES

5. Tabak is a professional photojournalist in the business of licensing his photographs to online, print, and television stations for a fee, having a usual place of business at 32 Leroy Street, Apt. 10, New York, New York 10014. Tabak's photographs have appeared in many publications around the United States.

6. Upon information and belief, Buffalo News a corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware, with a place of business at One News Plaza, Buffalo, New York 14203. At all times material hereto, Buffalo News has owned and operated a website at the following URL: www.buffalonews.com (the "Website").

STATEMENT OF FACTS

A. Background and Plaintiff's Ownership of the Photograph

7. On November 1, 2016, Tabak photographed Travell Thomas leaving a New York federal court with his attorney (the "Photograph"). A true and correct copy of the Photograph is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

8. Tabak then licensed the Photograph to the New York Daily News (the "Daily News"). On November 1, 2016, the Daily News ran an article that featured the Photograph on its web edition entitled, *Poker champ pleads guilty in alleged \$31M debt collection scheme*. See <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/manhattan/poker-champ-pleads-guilty-alleged-31m-debt-collection-scheme-article-1.2854382>. Tabak's name was featured in a gutter credit identifying him as the photographer of the Photograph. A true and correct copy of the Photograph in the Daily News article is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

9. Tabak is the author of the Photograph and has at all times been the sole owner of all right, title and interest in and to the Photograph, including the copyright thereto.

10. The Photograph was registered with the U.S. Copyright Office and was given Copyright Registration Number VA 2-022-661.

B. Defendant's Infringing Activities

11. On or about November 2, 2016, Buffalo News ran an article on the Website entitled *Buffalo debt collector pleads guilty in massive fraud*. See <http://buffalonews.com/2016/11/02/head-buffalo-debt-collection-agency-pleads-guilty-fraud/>. The article prominently featured the Photograph. A true and correct copy of the article is attached hereto as Exhibit C.

12. Buffalo News did not license the Photograph from Plaintiff for its article, nor did Buffalo News have Plaintiff's permission or consent to publish the Photograph on its Website.

CLAIM FOR RELIEF
(COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT AGAINST BUFFALO NEWS)
(17 U.S.C. §§ 106, 501)

13. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-12 above.

14. Buffalo News infringed Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph by reproducing and publicly displaying the Photograph on the Website. Buffalo News is not, and has never been, licensed or otherwise authorized to reproduce, publicly display, distribute and/or use the Photograph.

15. The acts of Defendant complained of herein constitute infringement of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright in violation of Sections 106 and 501 of the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. §§ 106 and 501.

16. Upon information and belief, the aforementioned acts of infringement by Buffalo News have been willful, intentional, and purposeful, in disregard of and with indifference to Plaintiff's rights.

17. As a direct and proximate cause of Defendant's infringement of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright, Plaintiff is entitled to recover his damages and Defendant's profits pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(b).

18. Alternatively, Plaintiff is entitled to statutory damages up to \$150,000 per work infringed for Defendant's willful infringement of the Photograph, pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(c).

19. Plaintiff further is entitled to recover his attorney's fees and full costs pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 505.

20. Defendant's conduct, described above, is causing, and unless enjoined and restrained by this Court, will continue to cause Plaintiff irreparable injury that cannot be fully compensated or measured in money damages. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment as follows:

1. That Defendant Buffalo News be adjudged to have infringed upon Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph in violation of 17 U.S.C §§ 106 and 501;
2. That Plaintiff be awarded either: a) Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's infringement of Plaintiff's Photograph; or b) alternatively, statutory damages of up to \$150,000 per copyrighted work infringed pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504;
3. That Defendant be required to account for all profits, income, receipts, or other benefits derived by Defendant as a result of its unlawful conduct;

4. That Plaintiff be awarded his costs, expenses and attorney's fees pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 505;
5. That Plaintiff be awarded pre-judgment interest; and
6. Such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Dated: April 12, 2017
Valley Stream, New York

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